

ICES MIACO REPORT 2015

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ICES CM 2015/ACOM:03

Report of the Meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers (MIACO)

13–14 January 2015

Copenhagen, Denmark



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

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l'Exploration de la Mer

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1 Opening of the meeting

The ACOM Chair, Eskild Kirkegaard, opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Copenhagen. Representatives from the North Sea, North Western Waters, Baltic Sea, Pelagic and Long Distance Advisory Councils, as well as from EU-DGMARE, Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association, Seas at Risk, the ACOM Leadership and ICES secretariat were in attendance. See list of participants in Annex 1.

Four participants were unfortunately unable to attend at the last minute and sent their apologies.

2 Adoption of the agenda

An item of experience of the implementation of the landings obligation was added to the meeting as a request from the North Western Waters AC.

3 Feedback from the 2014 advisory process

From Long Distance AC (LDAC)

The LDAC appreciate the openness and transparency of ICES. There is currently no direct participation of ICES in the LDAC activities. However, LDAC would like to invite a representative from ACOM leadership to attend the WG2 meeting (21–22 April). The LDAC will send an invitation in due time.

The AC members are very happy with the participation in the training course.

The LDAC would like to have future joint initiative with ICES. Good candidates for those initiatives are a) the Fishing Aggregation Devices (FADS); b) implementation of the landings obligation; improve in selectivity.

From the North Sea AC (NSAC)

The NSAC regrets the low 2014 attendance of NSAC members to ICES meetings. This was due to overlap with other activities. In 2015 the NSAC will have a better work prioritization.

For this meeting NSAC would like to have a discussion on the landings obligation.

The special requests are not always clear and understood by ICES and, as a consequence, the ICES reply may be useless.

Baltic Sea AC (BSAC)

The BSAC appreciate the close cooperation with the scientific community. In relation to the advice release in 2014, the two Baltic cod were a cause of concern. The BSAC would to have liked to see an intermediate solution between the 2013 situation (western cod advice based on the MP) and the 2014 (advice based on MSY framework).

The BSAC considers that the Advisory work plan is complicated to interpret.

From Pelagic AC (PelAC)

The PelAC appreciate the excellent “formal” communication and interaction with ICES. However, they would like to improve a more “informal” communication.

The PelAC appreciate the communication flow and their attendance in the benchmarks and ADG.

The PelAC understands that they are not allowed to attend (as observers) the advisory Expert Group meetings. However, they would like to have a half day meeting before and after the EG with the experts.

From North Western Waters AC (NWWAC)

NWWAC underlined the need to have better advice for sea bass.

NWWAC raised the issue of cooperation between ICES and STECF.

NWWAC would like to use this meeting as an opportunity to discuss the experiences related with the implementation of the landings obligation.

From South Western Waters AC (SWWAC)

Appreciate the good cooperation with ICES.

Pelagic Freezers Association (PFA)

Would like to see more transparency between the changes done throughout the advisory process. When changes or deviation from the EG decisions takes place in the ADGs or ACOM WC, that is not publically available.

Feedback on comments from the ACOM Chair

The ACOM chair appreciates the general positive feedback.

Concerning the suggestion for a more “informal” interaction with ICES and ICES scientist, the ACOM chair explained that the system is overburdened and there is no time for “informal” collaborations. Some suggestions made for more formal collaborations are welcome, such as the issue on selectivity raised by the LDAC, however, they will need to be further elaborated, so ICES is able to identify the resources needed and their availability.

The case of WKSIBCA is a successful example of stakeholder involvement. At that workshop the ageing methodology used for Baltic cod stocks was questioned, and after the meeting ICES set up a review process for the work that was presented at the workshop.

The ACOM chair recognizes the need to improve the communication with clients to understand the background of a request.

Regarding the transparency issue raised by PFA, the ACOM Chair clarified that observers have access to the minutes of the ADG and the minutes of the WC.

4 Format of advice (Doc 04)

The ACOM Chair presented the new format of advice. ICES gives advice on request. Using the MoUs as a basis, ICES is reformatting the ICES advice into several products to better meet its commitments under the MoUs for ecosystems, fisheries, and single fish stocks. For each ecoregion, ICES will present three products: ecosystem advice, fisheries advice, single-stock advice. The idea is that dividing the types of information into different products will help to better articulate and communicate.

The single-stock overview will be by ecoregion and will provide the “latest advice” for all stocks.

4.1 Q&A

- 1) (Industry) Looks nice, but they don't like that it looks like a divine verdict. All of the complex conditionalities are missing and science shouldn't be published in a Donald Duck version, like this. Concerned that it will only communicate a catastrophic message to managers. (ACOM Leadership) the information is still there, it is not being dumbed down.
- 2) (NGO) At the stock level, there are a lot of data, modelling and science. At the ecoregion level, how does it work? Under the MSFD, an ecosystem understanding is required. How is this done? (ACOM Leadership and ICES Secretariat) ICES is working with competent authorities to become the source of high quality, unbiased information, the standard on this topic. The information provided in the ecosystem section may not be as detailed as in the single-stock advice, but the information required to given an overview of the ecosystem and to address specific requests will be provided.
- 3) (NGO) Happy that the ecosystem advice is being maintained. Want technicalities included as they were last year. Request to include technical details on the survivability of a species. (ACOM Leadership) Will be included when available.
- 4) (PFA). A question about “advice”. The report is a lot of information. The “advice” includes information and advice. Doesn't this language overshoot a bit? Perhaps we should only give advice on what can actually be done? (ACOM Leadership) information is part of advice. It is more of an impact assessment.
- 5) (PFA). Has there been a request for this change? What is the feedback from people? (ACOM Leadership) this work started within ICES. It is becoming increasingly difficult to provide the information and advice while addressing the MoU within a single format. Yes, we have had dialogue with clients and incorporated it into the format.
- 6) (OCEANA) Requested that the forecast table included options corresponding to MSY Transition, consequence on bycatch species, etc.
- 7) (NWWRAC) how will mixed fisheries interactions be presented? Such as how Carmen makes the presentations to the ACs? (ACOM Leadership) Mixed fisheries considerations are including in the fisheries advice section.

The participants would like to see information on selectivity of gears; this would be relevant under the landings obligations.

The ACOM chairs clarified that the ICES advice is not only the advice *per se* but all the information given in the advice sheets.

5 Environmental/ecosystem advice

The Ecosystem overviews were introduced by Inigo Martinez with a presentation available on the SharePoint.

The Ecosystem Overviews aim to link human activities, the main pressures on the ecosystem components and the state from benthic habitat to marine mammals and birds.

The ecosystem overviews are structured around four sections 1) the Description of the Ecoregion (and relevant subareas), 2) environmental drivers (key signals within the environment and the ecosystem) 3) anthropogenic impacts as pressures, ranking the top five pressures that broadly influence each regional ecosystem and 4) the state of the Habitat and key biological characteristics of the ecosystem.

Currently drafts are available on the SharePoint for three ICES ecoregions: Bay of Biscay, Celtic Sea and North Sea. The Baltic Ecoregion is halfway developed.

The Plan for 2015–2016 includes four processes:

- 1) To finalise the drafts.
- 2) Start a process to draft ecosystem overviews on the Northern regions: Icelandic region, Norwegian Sea, Faroes waters and Barents Sea.

The overviews are seen as a progression towards operational implementation of the ecosystem approach in ICES and as such are aimed at informing expert working groups, Regional Seas Conventions, Member Countries, policy-makers and managers.

(BSAC): What is timeline for the Baltic and is HELCOM the only contributor? (ICES Secretariat): The Baltic Sea EcoOverviews are somehow stranded. HELCOM has offered to engage with this process during meeting for the HOLAS II project where a wide expertise will be gathered in April–May. No specific timeline but we expect re-igniting the process.

(PFA): Is there a formal benchmark process / when are the EcoOverviews due to be updated? (ICES Secretariat): The overviews will be adopted following a normal advisory procedure. The information contained on the EcoOverviews is not prone to change for a number of. A benchmark process is advisable to updates. However there will be specific operational products plugged into the EcoOverviews frame that will be updated annually or when new information is available.

6 Fisheries advice

The ACOM Leadership presented a plan for further development of ICES fisheries advice and to clarify the bases of ICES MSY approach, information on ICES approach, the work to optimise the frequency of stock assessments, and ICES approach to reopening of advice.

6.1 ICES MSY approach, (Doc 06a)

In presenting the MSY approach the ACOM Leadership underlined that it is not up to ICES to define desired probabilities of F being below or above F_{MSY} or the criteria for defining F_{MSY} ranges and that the 5% yield concept applied in setting ranges is not a recommendation from ICES but a demonstration.

6.2 Catch advice (landing obligation /discard ban), (Pres 06b)

ICES has pending on the available data since 2014 provided advice on total catch and not only landings. ICES reiterated that it will not be in the position to evaluate the implications the policy on the stock assessments until data and information on landings and discards become available. ICES underlined that landings and discard data are considered official whether they collected under the EU Control Regulation or under the DCF.

Concerning the use of data from fishers the ACOM Leadership noted that ICES has a formal data call process for requesting data from ICES Member Countries. Expert Groups will, however, use all relevant information in their work including information from stakeholders. Within the ICES advice, there is a section with information from the industry and other stakeholders.

Ambiguity and potential secondary meanings arise from words like “unwanted” and “illegal” catches. The ACOM Leadership explained that unwanted is a term used in EU regulations. Until data from species subject to the landing obligation becomes available the unwanted catch corresponds to the fraction of the catch that was previously discarded.

It was clarified in the meeting that the forecast conducted in ICES assumes a constant selectivity and that this might not be what will occur in the fishery.

AC representatives pointed at the assumption of constant discard rate in the forecast being wrong. If there is an increase or decrease in the predicted catch it is unlikely that the same proportional discard occur.

The participants questioned the ACOM leadership about how, for species where part of the discards may survive, the increase in mortality resulting from the discard now being landed will be addressed. It was clarified that for the stocks that ICES previously used the information on survival rates (*Nephrops* and salmon) in the advice, this will be taken into account. For other stocks where no information on survival is available ICES will assume no change in mortality.

ICES was requested to provide information on the number of stocks under each of the four discard case listed in the presentation (Pres 06b).

MIACO suggested a forum for exchange of experiences with the landing obligation be established and that ICES takes active part in the forum.

6.3 Frequency of stock assessments, (Pres 06c)

After clarification between the frequency of stock assessments and the frequency of advice, the participants generally supported ICES approach to optimise the frequency of assessment to ensure a better use of the available resources.

6.4 Reopening of the advice, (Doc 06d)

The participants agree that the reopening of advice should only take place when it resulted in a significant change in the advice.

6.5 Basis for single-stock advice, (Doc 06e, Pres 06e)

The ACOM Leadership presented the basis for ICES single-stock advice (hierarchy). There was an extensive discussion on the reasoning behind why ICES does not provide advice when management plans are not agreed upon by all relevant parties. ACOM leadership reiterated that ICES has no power to identify the level of agreement on management plans and ICES is only able to respond to requests for advice.

Representatives from the Pelagic AC requested ICES check with the relevant parties if the management plans developed for herring in the Celtic sea and the blue whiting should be used as basis for the advice for the two stocks.

7 Requests for advice, work plan 2015 and arrangements for communication with stakeholders (Doc 07)

ICES secretariat presented the advisory work plan and explained to participants where to find the more up to day information of all the advisory process.

The list of 2015 benchmarks and the proposal for 2016 was also presented.

The participants asked if it is possible to have an overview of the benchmark proposal in the ICES website. ICES secretariat will explore this request.

The Pelagic AC asked if and how they could put forward benchmark proposals. It was explained that the ACs are welcome to present to ICES those proposals for further consideration.

8 Advisory Leadership

The ICES General Secretary, Anne Christine Brusendorff presented in her welcome to the participants the recent changes in the secretariat and the ACOM leadership and introduced Cristina Morgado as head of ACOM support.

9 Dialogue meeting on aquaculture (Doc 09)

ACOM leadership presented information on the upcoming dialogue meeting on aquaculture and aims to bring together policy-makers, managers, industry, and scientists.

10 Points from the ACs

None.

11 Points from other observers

None.

12 AOB

12.1 Experience of the first 14 days of implementation of the landings obligation

Baltic Sea AC: Up to now the major problems are of logistic nature. As an example, the fishermen in Poland were requested to dump at sea the fish below the minimum conservation size (CCS) after they have been landed and record.

There is additional work on sorting the species that previously were discarded.

In terms of reducing the discards of the landings of fish below the minimum conservation size, nothing was detected up to now.

Pelagic AC: there are problems with the control and enforcement. National control authorities are taking different approach from the commission. There are legal uncertainty.

PFA: there are different rules of the National control agencies. There is a need for an extra person to take care of the quota swapping.

12.2 Evaluation of the meeting and recommendation for next year's meeting

There was consensus among the participants that the meeting has shown that there is good cooperation between ICES and ACs and it is valid to continue the discussion at this time of year.

Representatives from the ACs noted that initially the meeting was set up as a forum between ICES and ACs, and questioned the opening of the meeting to other observers as the ACs already account for all stakeholders.

12.2.1 Recommendations for next meeting

- Same timing (January);
- A central item should be the implementation of the landings obligation;
- All ACs should be invited;
- More discussions on data deficiencies, and possibilities for cooperation between ICES and the industry collecting data and information.

Annex 1: Participants list

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